REMARKS

On May 7, 2004, the Examiner issued an Office Action finding claims 1- 5, 7,9, 15-25, 27-33, 35,37 and 39-53 anticipated by a single reference, U.S. patent 6,280,325 issued to Fisk (hereinafter, "Fisk"). The Examiner objected to claims 6, 8, 10-14, 26, 34, 36 and 38 as being dependent upon rejected base claims.

Respectfully, the present invention, covering fully automated live "session bingo" is not disclosed in Fisk or elsewhere. The core of the present invention, found at paragraph 0014, is a system for conducting automated live sessions of traditional bingo. Fisk is totally silent on this subject.

> As soon as the caller terminal detects at least one winning bingo card, it halts further generation of called bingo numbers and signals the end of the current bingo game by sequentially displaying all winning bingo cards, along with the corresponding sales receipt, on TV monitors installed throughout casino. The caller terminal also automatically computes the prizes won by the winning cards and stores in a database the data detailing the outcome of the game, including the prizes won during the game, the winning bingo cards and the corresponding sales receipts. As soon as the current game ends, the caller terminal automatically initiates the next bingo game in the session and so on until the entire session is completed. Upon completion of the current bingo session, the bingo caller terminal automatically begins the next session.

Itkis Application paragraph 0014.

The Fisk invention teaches multiple computers on a network, processing in parallel comparisons between called bingo numbers and cards in play. This may facilitate the ability to process large numbers of bingo cards in real time, e.g. in wide area bingo games such as for state lotteries, but does not disclose the concept of automatic starting and stopping games, and/or automatically progressing to the next game and/or next session. Moreover, Fisk does not disclose the concept of bingo sessions at all.

In accordance with principles of the present invention, this difficulty is overcome by utilizing a computer network to compare bingo numbers to a large number of bingo cards Specifically, the network includes at least two computers, each of which stores an electronic representation of bingo cards from an ongoing, real-time bingo game. As each bingo number is called as part of the real-time bingo game, the bingo number is delivered to all computers in the network, and the computers simultaneously and in parallel compare the called numbers to those bingo cards stored in each respective computer. When a computer identifies a bingo card that has achieved a predetermined pattern of marked locations, the computer signals this event, so that the bingo game can be halted before an additional number is drawn. This computer-network approach is of particular advantage, because, in accordance with principles of the invention, the network can be expanded to whatever size is necessary to provide the needed computational power to ensure that bingo card matching is performed in real time as bingo numbers are drawn.

Fisk col. 4: 15-35.

Fisk teaching "the computer signals [that there is a winning card]" clearly indicates manual intervention, else there would be no need to "signal;" it would merely end the game. Itkis teaches to automatically end the game and, if the session is not complete, progress to the next game, or progress to the next session if there is one.

Bingo has a long history of being played in bingo halls as a social activity. However, this "session" style bingo requires significant on-site manpower to operate and manage. The novelty of the present invention is a system to completely automate live session bingo. Importantly, "session bingo" is a well-known term of art referring to a pre-determined sequence of live bingo games played in one period of time:

Session (bingo)

> An entire evening or daytime program of bingo consisting of "regular" games usually played on "hard cards" and special games played on "throwaways" or paper sheets. A session usually lasts somewhere between two and a half hours and three hours and 15 minutes.

> Nevada Gold Casino Website
> <http://www.nevadagoldcasino.com/gambling_terms/session-bingo/>

> "Just play regular session bingo every Sunday in June with a $15 or more buy in."

> Creek Nation Casino website
> <http://www.creeknationcasino.com/okmulgee/bingo.html>

Similarly, a typical live bingo session in Nevada casinos includes ten to twelve consecutive bingo games and lasts one hour. The next live bingo session typically starts after one hour break. Casinos usually offer eight to twelve bingo sessions a day.

It is counterintuitive to conceive of running a live bingo session, especially in a bingo hall, as an automated game. Before the present invention, it had never been done, relying instead on a significantly labor-intensive process involving callers and floor agents. Not only must each number be drawn and called manually, all purported winning bingo cards must be manually verified, and new games manually initiated. The present invention does away with all of manual labor:

> Most importantly, the electronic bingo player units typically participate in a live bingo session played in a dedicated bingo hall of the casino along with conventional paper bingo cards. In such a bingo session, the overall bingo game is not automated, is labor intensive, and the bingo caller continues to call new bingo numbers until a player loudly announces "bingo".

Itkis Application Paragraph 0005.

The present application is directed to live bingo sessions, particularly held in casinos as a means of attracting and keeping patrons for prolonged periods. This is very different than bingo games as contemplated in Fisk. As further explained in paragraph 007 of the present application, electronic automated bingo games similar to the Fisk invention are disadvantageous because they do not function to attract players to a casino to play other games between sessions.

Fisk discloses only a system facilitating the tracking a large number of bingo cards by using parallel operating computers. This is wholly irrelevant to the present invention – fully automated session bingo games.

Fisk does not disclose a computer-implemented automation system to operate live sequence of bingo games in a session. Fisk does not disclose <u>automatically</u> ending a game upon a winner being <u>automatically</u> determined, nor <u>automatically</u> starting the next game (or, for that matter automatically starting the next session) as taught by Itkis in the present application. In fact, Fisk emphasizes human intervention. See e.g. Fisk Col. 18: 19-21: "In response to a player having won a bingo game, or in response to other conditions, the <u>master of ceremonies</u> may wish to modify an ongoing bingo game." (Emphasis added)

With specific reference to the Examiner's analysis of Fisk, Applicant is at a loss to find in Fisk many of the elements purportedly found there.

Examiner states that Fisk discloses "the bingo ball hopper being disabled upon determination of one or more winning cards and notifying the winning participants." Even assuming *arguendo* that the Fisk "ball machine" is anything like the Itkis "ball hopper," notably absent from Fisk is <u>automatic</u> disabling of the bingo number generating device (e.g., ball hopper) when a winner of a game is <u>automatically</u> determined. This is essential for a fully automatic bingo session, but not necessary in an implementation as contemplated by Fisk. In fact, Fisk emphasizes the use if human operators:

> Simultaneously with each number being drawn, two <u>key operators</u> 58
>
> enter the drawn number into keyboards 60 connected to game

computer 50. Game computer 50 then determines whether the
numbers entered by operators 58 match, and if so, displays the entered
numbers on a monitor 62 for <u>confirmation by a supervisor</u> 64. When
<u>supervisor 64 confirms</u> that the entered number is the number drawn by
ball machine 56, game computer 50 broadcasts a message indicating
the called number to all computers in the network 100

Fisk col. 13:4-12. (Emphasis added).

Examiner states that Fisk "discloses a session of bingo games, the session
comprising at least two games in sequence, upon the occurrence of one or more
predetermined events, the occurrence enabling the bingo ball hopper wherein the
predestined event is a completion if a previous bingo game, start of a new game and a
predetermined number of sales f bingo cards for a new game." With all due respect, Fisk
does not use the term of art "session" anywhere. Instead, Fisk discloses multiple
<u>simultaneous</u> games, not a sequence of games automatically triggered by predetermined
events.

A further aspect of the present invention, is the ability of the computer
system to match bingo numbers to multiple sets of cards participating in
multiple simultaneous bingo games. Specifically, called numbers are
matched to cards participating in two or more separate, potentially
simultaneous bingo games. This aspect of the present invention allows a
single bingo number matching facility to be used by multiple wide-area
bingo games using one or more number calling facilities.

In specific embodiments, the multiple simultaneous games may begin
and end at different times, may have different rules (e.g., card size, card
numbers). Called numbers may be applicable to one, many, or all of the
simultaneous bingo games. As one specific example, a multi-state
"power bingo" game might be performed simultaneously with one or
more individual state-wide bingo games. . . .

Fisk col. 6:19-34 (Emphasis added).

The absence of the term of art "session" from Fisk is significant as it is well-known in the art to mean live sequence of bingo-hall style games. Fisk teaches away from this sort of live game, instead disclosing a highly complex computer system for tracking bingo cards in multiple simultaneous bingo games, such as state-wide and multi-state lotteries. Moreover, the parallel operating computers in Fisk do not automate the process of starting and stopping games, or progressing to the next game or session. It merely signals to a human operator that a card somewhere in the world has a bingo. It is up to the human operators to decide what to do next.

With the foregoing in mind, we have amended claims 1, 3, 4, 30, and 40 to clarify the nature of the automatic bingo session.

More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to clarify its meaning and to more specifically claim an automated live bingo session consisting of a sequence of bingo games. Similarly, claims 3 and 4 are amended to clarify that the claims are directed to an automated session bingo game. Claim 16 is amended to coordinate with terminology changes in claim 1. Claim 30 is amended to clarify that the present invention is specifically directed toward automated session bingo. Claim 40 is amended to clarify that it covers automated sequencing from one bingo game to the next in a bingo session.

Claims 54 and 55 are added to claim the disclosed step of automatically starting a new bingo session. *See* Itkis application paragraph 0058: "If the incremented session index points to a prescheduled next session, the processing returns to the step 'RESET GAME INDEX' 72 after time-scheduling of the next session is complete in step 'SCHEDULE NEXT GAME' 90."

Examiner found claims 6,8, 10-14, 26, 34, 36 and 38 allowable if re-written in independent form. New claims 56 – 67 are these allowable claims presented re-written in independent form.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1 and 30, dependent claims 3,4, 16 and 40 as amended, new claims 54 - 65 and all remaining dependent claims are patentable over the cited reference for at least these reasons.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the outstanding rejection as applied to independent claims 1 and 30, and claims dependent thereon. Since these claims are in condition for allowance, Applicant respectfully requests Examiner withdraw his objections to claims 6, 8, 10-14, 26, 34, 36 and 38 as they are now dependent on allowable claims. No new matter has been added. Favorable consideration of claims 1 – 67 is thought to be in order and is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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